DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 408 922 HE 030 267

TITLE	Survey of College Plans of Maryland High Ability Students.
INSTITUTION	Maryland State Higher Education Commission, Annapolis.
PUB DATE	Apr 97
NOTE	13p.
PUB TYPE	Numerical/Quantitative Data (110) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Ability; *Academically Gifted; *College Bound Students; College Choice; Data Analysis; *Financial Aid Applicants; High School Graduates; High School Seniors; High Schools; Higher Education; In State Students; Majors (Students); Paying for College; *Private Colleges; *Public Colleges; *Student Financial Aid
IDENTIFIERS	*Maryland

ABSTRACT

This report notes results of a survey of high-ability students who graduated from a Maryland high school in the spring of 1996. Survey respondents, 56 percent of whom were women, were asked what postsecondary institution they planned to attend; what reasons were most important to their decision; what was their intended academic major; and what financial aid package they were seeking. In text and tables the report summarizes demographic characteristics of respondents; presents data on college choice, noting that nearly 30 percent of students chose a Maryland campus; 54 percent selected an independent out-of-state institution; campuses chosen most frequently include Duke University, Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford University, Princeton University, and Williams College; provides data on intended major for public and private out-of-state and public and private in-state attendees; notes percentage of cost covered by financial aid package by type of institution; and lists, by type of institution, factor ratings for choice of school. Appended to the report is a copy of the survey questionnaire used. (CH)

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ED 408 922

MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

SURVEY OF COLLEGE PLANS OF MARYLAND HIGH ABILITY STUDENTS

April 1997

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Survey of College Plans of Maryland High Ability Students
1996

Introduction

Since 1979, the Maryland Higher Education Commission has conducted annual surveys of talented Maryland high school seniors to learn about their college plans. The intentions of these students are important to Maryland postsecondary institutions, since the reputation of a college or university is based in part on its ability to attract students with strong scholastic credentials. Until 1987, the survey included just National Merit or National Achievement Semifinalists. In that year, the study was expanded to include recipients of Maryland Distinguished Scholar awards--both for academic achievement and talent in the arts.

This report focuses on the results of the survey of high ability students who graduated from a Maryland high school in Spring 1996. Survey participants were asked to identify:

- the postsecondary institution they planned to attend;
- the reasons that were most important in arriving at their decision;
- their intended academic major; and
- their financial aid package.

Comparisons with the results of studies in previous years were made as appropriate.

Methodology

Questionnaires were mailed in July 1996 to all 600 Maryland high school seniors who were named National Merit or National Achievement Semifinalists or were Maryland Distinguished Scholar recipients. The study was conducted at this time to maximize the number of students who had firm college plans. The response rate of the survey was 61 percent. A copy of the survey instrument is appended to this report.

Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Women comprised 56 percent of the high ability students who responded to the survey. Nearly three-fourths (73 percent) of the students were white; 15 percent, Asian; and 9 percent, African-American. Montgomery County was identified as the residence of 37 percent of the respondents, followed by Baltimore (16 percent), Howard (11 percent) and Prince George's (8 percent) counties.

Choice of College of Maryland High Ability Students By Race and Gender					
	Public Out-of-State	Private Out-of-State	Maryland Public	Maryland Private	% of Total
Race					
African-American	19.4%	38.7%	25.8%	16.1%	8.7%
White	10.3%	52.7%	26.0%	11.0%	73.4%
Asian	1.9%	73.1%	19.2%	5.8%	14.6%
Other Minority	8.3%	41.7%	41.7%	8.3%	3.4%
Sex					
Male	10.0%	59.0%	23.0%	8.0%	44.4%
Female	9.4%	50.0%	28.2%	12.4%	55.6%

Results

Choice of College

Since 1979, a substantial majority of National Merit and National Achievement Semifinalists in Maryland have selected a college or university outside the State. These students represent the top 2 percent of all high school graduates academically. **However, since 1994, nearly 30 percent of these highly selective and sought after students chose a Maryland campus. This is the highest percentage in the history of the survey.**

A greater percentage of the students who were offered a Maryland Distinguished Scholar award have stayed in the State than has been the case for National Merit or National Achievement Semifinalists. However, a majority of the students who were offered Maryland Distinguished Scholar awards for academic ability have still chosen an out-of-state institution. In all but one year, a majority of students who have been offered a Maryland Distinguished Scholar award for their artistic talent have stayed in Maryland.

Percentage of Maryland High Ability Students Who Went Out-of-State to College			
	Nat'l Merit Semifinalist	Maryland Distinguished Scholar (High Ability)	Maryland Distinguished Scholar (Talent-Arts)
1979	82.6%	-	-
1980	72.6%	-	-
1981	76.1%	-	-
1982	76.1%	-	-
1983	80.6%	-	-
1984	77.5%	-	-
1985	80.2%	-	-
1986	82.2%	-	-
1987	82.8%	55.3%	42.0%
1988	77.7%	-	-
1989	79.1%	52.8%	50.7%
1990	75.8%	57.3%	35.1%
1991	74.0%	66.5%	38.1%
1992	78.6%	57.1%	33.3%
1994	70.1%	64.0%	41.8%
1995	71.1%	55.6%	41.2%
1996	71.0%	60.3%	40.5%
Note: Distinguished scholar recipients were first included in the survey in 1987, and then surveyed each year since 1989. The high ability student survey was not conducted in 1993.			

A majority of the 1996 high ability students (54 percent) selected an independent out-of-state institution. The campuses chosen most frequently:

- Duke University
- Harvard University
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Stanford University
- Princeton University
- Williams College.

Thirty seven percent of Maryland's high ability students decided to enroll at a Maryland public or independent institution in 1996. Maryland public four-year colleges and universities enrolled 64 percent of these students; independent institutions, 29 percent; and community colleges, 7 percent.

The University of Maryland at College Park has traditionally recruited the largest percentage of high ability students who remain in Maryland. However, although the number of National Merit and National Achievement Semifinalists to select UMCP has risen from 18 to 28 since 1990, UMCP's share of high ability students has dropped during this period, as greater percentages have enrolled at University of Maryland Baltimore County, St. Mary's College and The John's Hopkins University. In 1996, 36 percent of the high ability students enrolling in a Maryland college or university chose UMCP, compared to 48 percent in 1990. During the same period, UMBC's percentage of those high ability students who stayed in Maryland rose from 8 percent to 10 percent, St. Mary's increased from 4 percent to 9 percent and John's Hopkins grew from 6 percent to 9 percent.

Colleges Selected by
Maryland High Ability High School Seniors

	1990	1996
Maryland Institutions		
Community Colleges		
Anne Arundel	0.2%	0.3%
Baltimore City	0.2%	0.5%
Hagerstown	0.2%	-
Charles	-	0.3%
Montgomery	0.2%	0.5%
Prince George's	0.2%	0.8%
Subtotal	0.9%	2.5%
Four-Year Public		
Coppin	-	0.3%
Frostburg	0.5%	0.3%
Salisbury	1.4%	0.3%
Towson	2.3%	2.5%
UMBC	2.9%	3.6%
UMCP	17.0%	13.2%
St. Mary's	1.4%	3.3%
Subtotal	25.5%	23.4%

	1990	1996
Maryland Institutions		
Independents		
Goucher	0.5%	0.5%
Hood	0.4%	0.3%
Johns Hopkins	2.1%	3.3%
Loyola	1.6%	1.6%
MD Institute of Art	1.6%	0.3%
Mount St. Mary's	-	0.5%
Notre Dame	0.4%	0.3%
Peabody	-	0.3%
St. Johns	0.2%	0.3%
Washington Bible	0.2%	-
Washington College	0.5%	1.9%
Western Maryland	1.1%	1.1%
Subtotal	8.6%	10.4%
U.S. Naval Academy	0.7%	0.3%
Total All MD Institutions	**35.7%**	**36.5%**
Other States		
Public	15.4%	9.6%
Private	48.9%	53.8%
Total Other States	64.3%	63.5%
Grand Total	100.0%	100.0%

Academic Plans

Almost all of the respondents indicated that they had selected a major. A majority of these high ability students intended to study engineering (24 percent), biological science (19 percent) or fine and applied arts (18 percent). Science and technology related fields (especially engineering) have been the most popular majors throughout the history of the survey. Of the students who planned to study engineering, biological science or the arts, most selected an out-of-state institution. A majority of students who chose business, communications, languages or mathematics as their major picked a Maryland public institution.

Choice of College of Maryland High Ability Students By Intended Major

	Public Out-of-State	Private Out-of-State	Maryland Public	Maryland Private	% of Total
Architecture		33.3%	66.7%		1.2%
Area Studies			100.0%		0.8%
Biological Science	10.2%	44.9%	34.7%	10.2%	19.4%
Business		25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	1.6%
Communications			50.0%	50.0%	1.6%
Computer Science	8.3%	58.3%	25.0%	8.3%	4.8%
Engineering	11.5%	62.3%	19.7%	6.6%	24.2%
Fine & Applied Arts	13.6%	40.9%	36.4%	9.1%	17.5%
Languages			75.0%	25.0%	1.6%
Health	11.1%	33.3%	44.4%	11.1%	3.6%
Home Economics		75.0%	25.0%		1.6%
Law		100.0%			0.4%
Letters		80.0%	20.0%		4.0%
Mathematics	10.0%	30.0%	60.0%		4.0%
Physical Science	10.0%	50.0%	30.0%	10.0%	4.0%
Psychology	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	40.0%	2.0%
Public Affairs		100.0%			0.4%
Social Science	5.3%	52.3%	15.8%	26.3%	7.5%
Total	**9.5%**	**48.4%**	**31.3%**	**10.7%**	**100.0%**

Financial Aid

High ability students who selected a Maryland public campus have consistently had much more of their first year's college costs covered by financial aid than have talented students who have gone out-of-state. Since 1990, 40 percent or more of the high ability students attending a Maryland public campus had all of their first year college costs covered by their financial aid package. In 1996, 54 percent had all their first year college costs covered. This is the highest percentage in the history of the survey.

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Most of the students who chose an out-of-state college or university or a Maryland independent institution had a much smaller percentage of their initial year's cost covered by financial assistance. In nearly every year, a majority of the students attending an out-of-state institution (either public or private) had no more than 25 percent of their first year costs covered by financial assistance.

Percentage of First-Year Educational Costs Covered by Financial Aid Package By Type of Institution

	0-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-99%	100%
Public Out-of-State	57.6%	9.1%	9.1%	3.0%	21.2%
Private Out-of-State	57.8%	17.2%	10.4%	12.5%	2.1%
Maryland Public	13.0%	12.0%	8.7%	12.0%	54.3%
Maryland Private	23.7%	7.9%	18.4%	39.5%	10.5%
All Students	**42.5%**	**14.1%**	**10.7%**	**14.4%**	**18.3%**

Reasons for Choice of Institution

Maryland high ability students were asked to indicate how important 24 factors were in the choice of a college or university. The following table contains the percentage of respondents who ranked each item as "very important" to their decision. The reasons that were instrumental in attracting the greatest number of students were the quality and selectivity of the school and the students' planned academic program:

- Overall reputation of the college (69 percent)
- Faculty commitment to good teaching (64 percent)
- Superior program in intended major (59 percent)
- Success of graduates in finding a job or gaining admission to graduate or professional school (55 percent)
- Quality of the student body (50 percent)
- Appearance or atmosphere of the college (49 percent)

More than one-third of the respondents indicated that financial assistance, a smaller student body, school contacts, a good faculty/student ratio, and special programs for academically talented students were key considerations.

In contrast, the reasons that were cited most frequently as very important to the academically talented students who selected a Maryland public college or university were financial. Seventy percent of these students cited lower tuition costs or better financial aid offered as a prime reason for their decision to go to a public campus in Maryland--a

much greater proportion than their counterparts who went outside the State for higher education. In addition, a greater proportion of the seniors enrolling at a Maryland public institution than all respondents (51 percent to 35 percent) stressed the availability of special programs for academically talented students. Many students who selected a Maryland public campus indicated in written comments that these institutions are improving their reputation.

Percentage of Maryland High Ability Students Who Rated Certain Factors as Being Very Important to Their Decision to Attend a Type of Postsecondary Institution

	Public Out-of-State	Private Out-of-State	Maryland Public	Maryland Private	All Students
Overall reputation of the college	74.3%	81.1%	42.6%	65.8%	69.4%
Faculty commitment to good teaching	60.0%	68.9%	46.8%	78.9%	63.9%
Superior program in intended major	60.0%	57.1%	62.8%	52.6%	59.2%
Graduate success in job/grad school	57.1%	67.9%	28.7%	44.7%	54.6%
Quality student body	48.6%	66.3%	20.2%	39.5%	50.3%
Impressed by appearance/atmosphere	54.3%	59.7%	26.6%	42.1%	49.0%
Better financial assistance offered	25.7%	24.0%	70.2%	65.8%	40.9%
Good faculty/student ratio	37.1%	44.4%	21.3%	55.3%	39.2%
Student body not too large	22.9%	42.3%	21.3%	52.6%	36.5%
School contacts made a good impression	22.9%	43.9%	26.6%	31.6%	36.3%
Special programs for acad. talented students	31.4%	25.5%	51.1%	34.2%	34.5%
Live away from home	34.3%	33.2%	14.9%	23.7%	27.7%
Tuition costs	28.6%	9.7%	70.2%	7.9%	27.6%
College social life	34.3%	32.1%	10.6%	10.5%	24.7%
Good graduate program in intended major	17.1%	19.9%	11.7%	21.1%	17.9%
Diversity of student body	22.9%	19.4%	14.9%	7.9%	17.5%
Parents felt it best choice	17.1%	15.3%	21.3%	10.5%	16.7%
College location	17.1%	17.9%	2.1%	13.2%	13.4%
Knew most about it	11.4%	11.7%	9.6%	18.4%	12.1%
Religious or ethnic considerations	5.7%	12.2%	5.3%	5.3%	9.3%
Friends recommended it	5.7%	11.7%	4.3%	7.9%	8.9%
Teacher/counselor recommendation	5.7%	6.1%	9.6%	2.6%	6.7%
Attend college close to home	8.6%	1.5%	13.8%	10.5%	6.4%
Good campus athletics/sports program	8.6%	8.2%	2.1%	2.6%	6.1%

Maryland Distinguished Scholar recipients were asked whether the award played an important role in determining their college choice. The proportion who have deemed it very important has ranged between 18 and 29 percent since 1990. During these years, approximately 40 percent of the Maryland Distinguished Scholar recipients indicated that the award was <u>not</u> important in influencing their selection of a college.

Students attending an out-of-state institution were asked to suggest changes or improvements they thought would make Maryland's public colleges and universities more attractive to academically talented students. Frequent recommendations: improving the academic reputation of and programs offered by state schools, decreasing the size of UMCP's student body, and enhancing the quality of the student body and selectivity at Maryland public institutions.

Maryland Higher Education Commission
16 Francis Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1781

Survey of Academically Talented High School Seniors

Please fill in blanks or circle the number next to the most appropriate response.

1. Do you plan to attend college next fall?
   1- Yes ⇨ If Yes, continue with question 2
   2- No ⇨ If NO, please explain why below
   3- Undecided ⇨ Please explain why below

   _____
   _____

If you do not plan to attend college next fall or are undecided, you should stop here. The rest of the questionnaire does not apply to you. Please return the questionnaire in the postage-paid envelope.

We thank you for your help and time.

2. Have you decided which college you will attend next fall?
   1- Yes
   2- No ⇨ If No, skip to question 7.

In responding to questions 3 and 4, if referring to a multi-campus university, specify which campus. For example, instead of writing "University of Maryland" you should write "Univ. of Md-College Park", or "Univ. of Md.-Balto Co.", etc.

3. Which college or university do you plan to attend next fall?

   _____

4. To which other colleges or universities did you actually apply?

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. Approximately what proportion of your first year college costs (tuition and fees, room and board) will be covered by the financial aid package you have been offered at the college you plan to attend next fall?

   1- 0-25%
   2- 26-50%
   3- 51-75%
   4- 76-99%
   5- 100%

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6. Please rate how important was each of the factors listed below in your choice of a college or university. Using the following scale, write the appropriate rating in the blank next to each factor:
   1- Very important
   2- Somewhat important
   3- Not important

   a. Overall reputation of the college ____
   b. Had a superior program in your intended major ____
   c. Better financial assistance offered ____
   d. Wanted to live away from home ____
   e. Attracted by the quality of the student body ____
   f. Parent(s) felt it was the best choice ____
   g. Wanted to attend college close to home ____
   h. Attracted by the diversity of the student body ____
   i. Tuition costs are less ____
   j. Teacher or counselor recommended it ____
   k. Knew more about it than other college ____
   l. Wanted to go to school in the area in which the school is located ____
   m. Friends recommended it ____
   n. Special programs for academically talented students ____
   o. The size of the student body not too large ____
   p. Contacts by the school made a good impression ____
   q. Had a good graduate program in your intended major ____
   r. Good campus athletics or sports program ____
   s. Impressed by the appearance or atmosphere of the campus ____
   t. Graduates have reputation for success in finding a job or getting into graduate/professional school ____
   u. Social life at the college ____
   v. Good faculty/student ratio ____
   w. Faculty commitment to good teaching ____
   x. Religious or ethnic considerations ____
   y. Other reason(s):

   _____

   _____

   _____

7. a. Have you decided what undergraduate program or major you will pursue?
      1- Yes
      2- No
   b. If Yes, what is this major?

   _____

OVER ⇨

8. Have you been offered a Maryland Distinguished Scholar Award and, if so, how important was it to your college choice?
   1- No
   2- Yes, very important
   3- Yes, somewhat important
   4- Yes, not important

9. a. Have you been actively recruited by any public colleges or universities in Maryland?
      1- Yes, I have been sent unsolicited literature about a college
      2- Yes, I have been contacted personally by a representative from a college
      3- Yes, both of the above
      4- No, I have not been actively recruited
   b. If yes, which colleges or universities?

_____

_____

_____

10. What is your sex?
    1- Female
    2- Male

11. What is your race/ethnic origin?
    1- Asian
    2- Black
    3- Hispanic
    4- White
    5- Other

12. In what county do you live? _____

    (Please use number corresponding to county.)

    1- Allegany
    2- Anne Arundel
    3- Baltimore County
    4- Calvert
    5- Caroline
    6- Carroll
    7- Cecil
    8- Charles
    9- Dorchester
    10- Frederick
    11- Garrett
    12- Harford
    13- Howard
    14- Kent
    15- Montgomery
    16- Prince George's
    17- Queen Anne's
    18- St. Mary's
    19. Somerset
    20. Talbot
    21- Washington
    22- Wicomico
    23- Worchester
    24- Baltimore City
    25- Out-of-state

13. a. If you plan to attend a public college or university in Maryland, please share with us your overall reasoning for making that decision, especially why you chose a public Maryland institution over other colleges and universities.
    b. If you plan to attend an out-of-state institution or a private institution in Maryland, please suggest changes or improvements that you think would make Maryland's public colleges and universities more attractive to academically talented students like yourself.

Thank you very much for your help and time. If you would like to receive a copy of the survey report when it is completed, please fill in your name and home address below:

Name_____

Street_____

City/State/Zip_____

Please mail this survey in the enclosed postage-paid envelope.